

**Dace Markus**

Liepaja University, Latvia

**Tija Zīriņa**

Liepaja University, Latvia

**Kārlis Markus**

Latvia University of Life Sciences and Technologies, Latvia

## **LANGUAGE POLICY IMPLEMENTATION IN LATVIAN PRE-SCHOOL: LATVIAN LANGUAGE SKILLS OF MINORITY CHILDREN**

---

**Summary.** Latvian is the only official language in Latvia and one of the symbols of an independent state. The article provides a brief insight into the history of its reinforcement, which has not been easy. Education is one of the areas in which it is very important to develop multilingualism, while not forgetting to strengthen state language skills and their application. As the education system continues to reveal shortcomings in the process of Latvian language acquisition, Cabinet Regulations adopted in 2018 "Regulations Regarding the State Guidelines for Pre-school Education and the Model Pre-school Education Programmes" update the need for a successful transition from pre-school education to primary education at school, from pre-school education to bilingual primary school education or education carried out in Latvian. In minority families with a dominant Russian language, children acquire Russian well before pre-school age, and it is time to start learning the state language at pre-school age if this has not already been done. Taking these requirements into account, the article analyses the Latvian language skills of children of pre-school age, using 375 child speech recordings made by researchers in 2019 and 2020 in three regions – Kurzeme (Western Latvia), Latgale (Eastern Latvia), and Riga (capital). The materials are divided into three groups in each of the territories: recordings of Latvian children, recordings of minority children in groups with the Latvian language on a daily basis, and recordings of minority children in groups with the Russian language on a daily basis. The main problem is that regardless of the region, the Latvian language skills of minority children who attend pre-school education groups with a dominant Russian language on a daily basis are still insufficient and do not comply with the requirements set in Cabinet Regulation No. 716 of 2018 that the children should be prepared to start school with the Latvian as the learning language or bilingually. This suggests that the legislative provisions are not fully implemented and improvements are necessary for the Latvian language training system for minority children.

**Keywords:** Latvian language policy; minority children; language acquisition; pre-school age.

### **Introduction**

#### **A Brief Historical Introduction**

The first books in Latvian were published in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, and the fact that Latvians could study at university seemed an unimaginable fantasy. Still, in

the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, there was a period of German oppression, and the Latvian language had no rights. However, in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Neo-Latvians contributed immensely to developing the Latvian language and culture. It was Tartu University (*Kaiserliche Universität zu Dorpat* (also *Imperatorskij Derptschij Universitet*) where Latvians obtained higher education and cultivated their language, and it was the only place where the Latvian language had been taught as a university subject since 1803. German took a high position as a competing language in Latvia from the 17<sup>th</sup> until the 19<sup>th</sup> century. As political power changed, so did the educational policy. The main threat was different – at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, it was the policy of Russification. In 1887, the usage of Latvian became illegal and was replaced by Russian.

It is certain that the foundation of the State of Latvia in 1918 ensured the national stronghold of the Latvian language. In 1932 regulations on the State Language (*Noteikumi par valsts valodu*, 18.02.1932) were adopted. They stipulated that Latvian was the official state language in the Republic of Latvia, and as such, it was obligatory in state and municipal institutions and companies; also in the contacts with citizens and legal entities, in the army and the navy. The first article in the Law of the State Language adopted in 1935 recognizes Latvian as the state language, but the second article stipulated that the usage of the state language is obligatory in the army, navy, all state and municipal institutions, also in private establishments of a legal character (*Likums par valsts valodu*, 1935).

The Latvian linguist Aina Blinkena emphasized that until 1940 when the Soviet occupation ceased the law and Latvian lost its status as the official state language, the State of Latvia had supported the curation and research on the Latvian language. Teachers of and researchers on Latvian were educated, the Depository of the Latvian Language worked, many norms of the literary language were introduced, and many of such norms are in effect even nowadays. Such a foundation did not allow to Russify Latvian during the fifty years of occupation (Blinkena, 2017, p. 58).

In 1940, when the inhabitants of Latvia began to be assimilated into the Russian USSR, Latvian lost its status as an official language. As a result of deportations and colonization, the number of Latvians in Latvia decreased from

76% to 52% from 1935 until 1989. In all official areas, Russian was introduced. At the same time, the Latvian language and culture during the fifty years of occupation were the main values that supported the survival of the nation (Oficiālās statistikas portāls, 01.11.2021). **Consequent constitutional protection of Latvian was absent in education and other fields.**

The year 1988 was very important for establishing Latvian as the official language. Druviete writes: "The historical decision on October 6, 1988 «On the Status of the Latvian Language» (adopted by the Supreme Soviet of the Latvian SSR before the restoration of the independence of the Republic of Latvia) was the onset of the process changing the hierarchy of languages and eliminating Russification" (Druviete, 2018, p. 48). Companies started to organize Latvian language courses. The status of the State language was being strengthened step by step thus leading us closer to the idea of an independent state. In 1989, "The Law On Languages of the Latvian SSR" (Latvijas Padomju Sociālistiskās Republikas 1989. gada 5. maija Valodu likums 1989) was passed. It contained the phrase – "in the Latvian SSR, Russian is the second most widely used language after Latvian" (Latvijas Padomju Sociālistiskās Republikas 1989. gada 5. maija Valodu likums 1989, 20). Measures were thus taken to intensify teaching the Latvian language and reorganize record keeping and documentation.

The restoration of the independence of the Republic of Latvia in 1991 and the granting to Latvian the status of the official language are interrelated. In 1992, "The Law on Amendments and Supplements to the Law on Languages of the Latvian SSR" excluded a sentence pertaining to the special rights of Russian (Par grozījumiem un papildinājumiem Latvijas Padomju Sociālistiskās Republikas Valodu likumā 10.04.1992.). There were Russian campaigns in the press regarding the seeming discrimination of the Russian speaking population and inhabitants were misinformed.

However, the Latvian State Language Centre, the State Language Inspectorate, the State Language Attestation Commission were founded; sociolinguistic studies on language skills and speakers' attitudes to the official language began; Latvian terminology grew richer. All these factors contributed to giving up the so-called minority complex in the Latvian society that would otherwise have to adjust to using the Russian language, but the influence of

competing elements remained. In 2004, the Latvian language became one of the official languages in the European Union but nowadays the biggest competing languages in Latvia are Russian and English. For that reason, **we should ensure both** the development of the state language and its rights to function at all levels, also in education.

### **Latvian Language in Education**

It is possible to speak about the acquisition of Latvian as a native language or LAT1 in education since the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century when the first Latvian ABC book was published (Anspoka, 2019). Latvian was taught at schools to different nationalities already in the 1920s, but the purposeful formation of the basic guidelines for Latvian as a second language or LAT2 began at the beginning of the 1990s (Laizāne, 2019). In the 1960s, another variety of acquisition was established in the Latvian linguodidactics, namely, Latvian as a foreign language or LATS.

**In order to consolidate the role and significance of the official language in its place in the language acquisition process, in recent years Latvia has adopted several new legal acts on the regulation of language use in pre-school and school**, namely Cabinet Regulation No. 716 of November 21, 2018 "Regulations Regarding the State Guidelines for Pre-school Education and the Model Pre-school Education Programmes" (effective from September 1, 2019). In accordance with Cabinet Regulation No. 716 of November 21, 2018, from September 1, 2019 each child must be prepared to start learning in the 1<sup>st</sup> grade in Latvian or bilingually (50% in Latvian, 50% in Russian), in addition to learning another foreign language, while the amendments to the General Education Law as of May 14, 2020 stipulate that local governments are obliged to ensure the opportunity to complete the pre-school education programme in the state language at all pre-school education institutions subordinate thereto (Grozījumi Vispārējās izglītības likumā 14.05.2020). Following the required successful transition from pre-school to teaching in Latvian or bilingually in these documents, the study did not analyze the acquisition of the language of children of different ages (Asher, & Garcia, 1969; Munoz, 2014) but only the Latvian proficiency of children of pre-school age.

**The aim of the article** is to study the implementation course of language policy requirements in pre-school specified in legislative acts and to provide recommendations for solving problems.

The following **tasks** were performed to achieve the aim:

- To carry out recordings and analyze the results of a picture-based language proficiency test in Latvian which has been developed in the 8<sup>th</sup> project of the "Latvian Language" National research programme.
- To study and evaluate the Latvian language skills of children in pre-school educational institutions in Kurzeme (2019 and 2020), Riga (2019 and 2020), and Latgale (2020) in accordance with the developed methodology, performing and analyzing 25 speech recordings of Latvian children per year in each of the territories, 25 speech recordings of minority children in groups with Latvian on a daily basis and 25 speech recordings of minority children in groups with Russian on a daily basis. In Riga and Kurzeme, 150 recordings in 2019 were analyzed and in Kurzeme, Latgale, and Riga 225 recordings in 2020 were evaluated. The total number of entries – is 375.
- To compare the requirements specified in the legislation with the actual Latvian language skills in pre-school and inform the Ministry of Education and Science about the results.

### **Methodology**

The recordings were made by researchers prepared in the framework of state research programme "Letonika – Fostering a Latvian and European Society" project "Use and Development of Contemporary Latvian" (N<sup>o</sup> VPP-LETONIKA-2022/1-0001). Conversations with each child did not exceed 20 minutes (see also Béréšová, 2019). The Latvian language skills of children were assessed in points, determining the level: 0 points (insufficient level) - does not show or shows very minimal (<5%) knowledge and skills; 1 point (low level) – shows minimal (<25%) knowledge and application skills; 2 points (intermediate level – shows the average (>50%) knowledge and skills of use; 3 points (high level – shows good (>75%) knowledge and skills of use). Each of

the evaluation sections consisted of a set of indicators expressed in points. The analysis was based on Tomme-Jukēvica's (2018) development recommendations:

1. **dialogue speech** – understands instructions, answers questions, forms questions, starts a conversation, uses speech etiquette;
2. **fluency of speech** – speaks fluently, paraphrases, logically connects speech, pauses;
3. **pronunciation** – pronounces sounds accurately, uses emphasis correctly;
4. **vocabulary** – relevant to the topic, diverse, unnecessary to use another language;
5. **grammar** – uses correct grammatical forms, uses various sentence structures;
6. **literacy** – knows letters, reads syllables, words, and sentences.

The evaluation indicators used in this study are consistent with international practices in the assessment of language acquisition and they include “learning the sounds and sound patterns of the language (phonological development), learning the vocabulary of the language (lexical development), learning the structure of the language (grammatical, or morphosyntactic, development), and learning how to use language to communicate (pragmatic and sociolinguistic development)” (Hoff, 2005, p. 32).

Speech recordings of pre-school children were made in May and June 2019, as well as in June 2020, to check whether these children can start learning bilingually or in Latvian in the 1<sup>st</sup> grade of primary education in the autumn. The recordings were made in three regions – Kurzeme (Western Latvia), Latgale (Eastern Latvia), and Riga (capital), but the researchers have been processing the work in the other two ethnic regions of Latvia (Vidzeme and Zemgale) and will continue to analyze the future progress of the Latvian language learning. They will provide recommendations to policy makers, to authors of teaching aids and academic staff of prospective teacher training programs to help minority children to acquire at least two languages for successful studies at school.

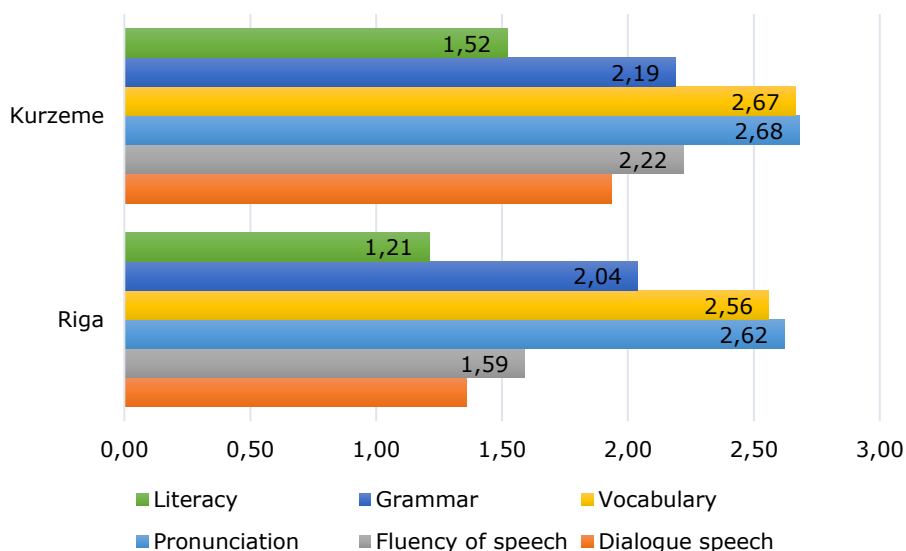
## Results

### Results in Riga and Kurzeme in 2019

It is not surprising that the best results in the Latvian language test are for children for whom it is their mother tongue (see Figure 1). In the study, their Latvian language skills are rated between medium and high and they are appropriate for learning at school. The features of the dialect were recognised in 3 children in Kurzeme, who used the wide vowel e [æ] in place of the normative narrow e, in the words sit – sēdēt [sæ:dæ:t], eat – ēst [æ:st]. There is an important finding that children's speech recordings also show another convincing trend – the Latvian language skills of minority children attending Latvian language groups are significantly better for all indicators (Figure 2) than the Latvian skills of minority children attending groups with a dominant Russian language on a daily basis (Figure 3).

#### Figure 1

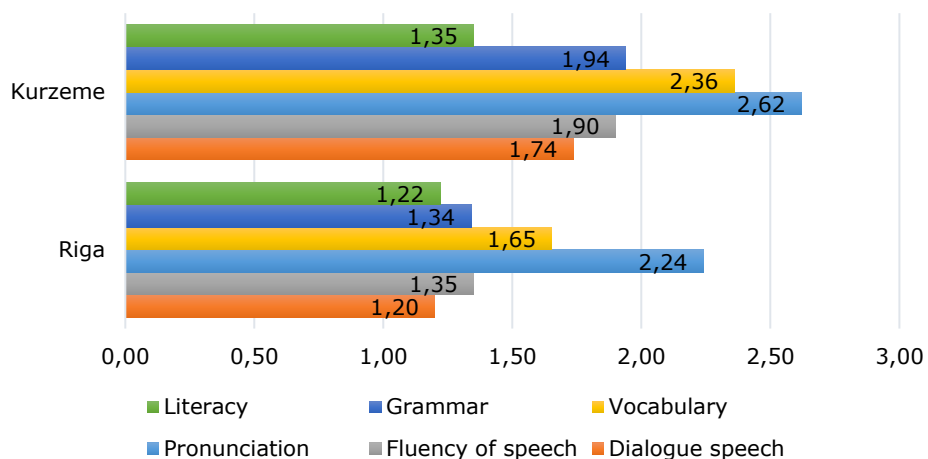
*Comparison of average Latvian language proficiency results for children with Latvian as their mother tongue in 2019*



*Note.* The score from 0–3.

**Figure 2**

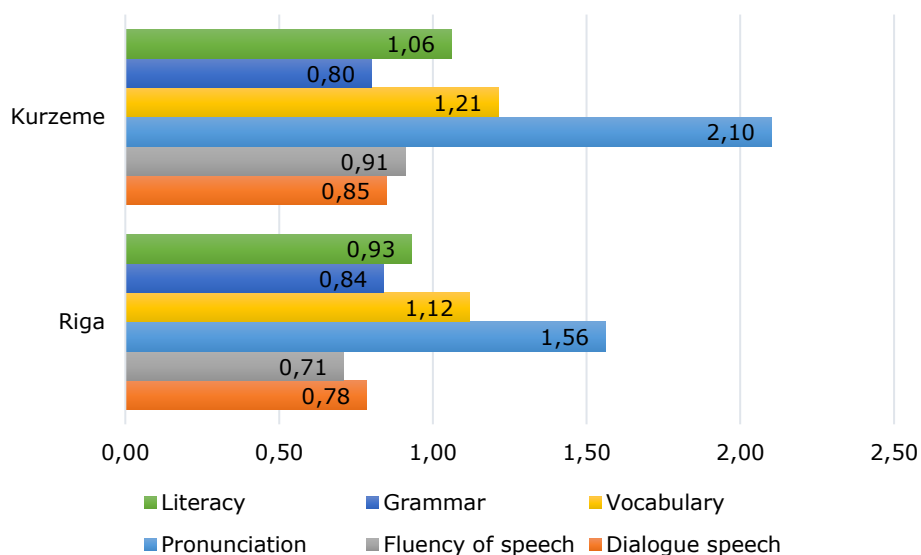
*Comparison of average Latvian language proficiency results of minority children in Latvian language groups in 2019*



*Note.* The score from 0–3.

**Figure 3**

*Comparison of average Latvian language proficiency results of minority children in Russian language groups in 2019*



*Note.* The score from 0–3.



The same tendency can be observed in the recordings made in Riga – the Latvian language skills of minority children attending the Latvian language groups are better (Figure 2) than the Latvian language skills of minority children attending groups with a dominant Russian language on a daily basis (Figure 3). In both Kurzeme and Riga recordings made in 2019, Latvian language proficiency in groups of minority children with a dominant Russian language is mostly insufficient or low; only pronunciation proficiency reaches the assessment between low and medium level (Figure 3). In general, in 2019, the average indicators of children's Latvian language skills in both Kurzeme and Riga showed common language acquisition trends.

### **Results in Riga, Kurzeme and Latgale in 2020**

The best average achievements of pre-school children in 2020 were in pronunciation (score 2.08–2.74). Even those children for whom Latvian is not their mother tongue showed one of the best performances in direct pronunciation. This is contrary to the observations of adult speech, because when learning a second language, differences in pronunciation are usually long-lasting due to the habits of the mother tongue (including dialect). During the research, we observed that minority children had almost no difficulty in imitating the pronunciation of the Latvian language, even if they did not understand the meaning of words.

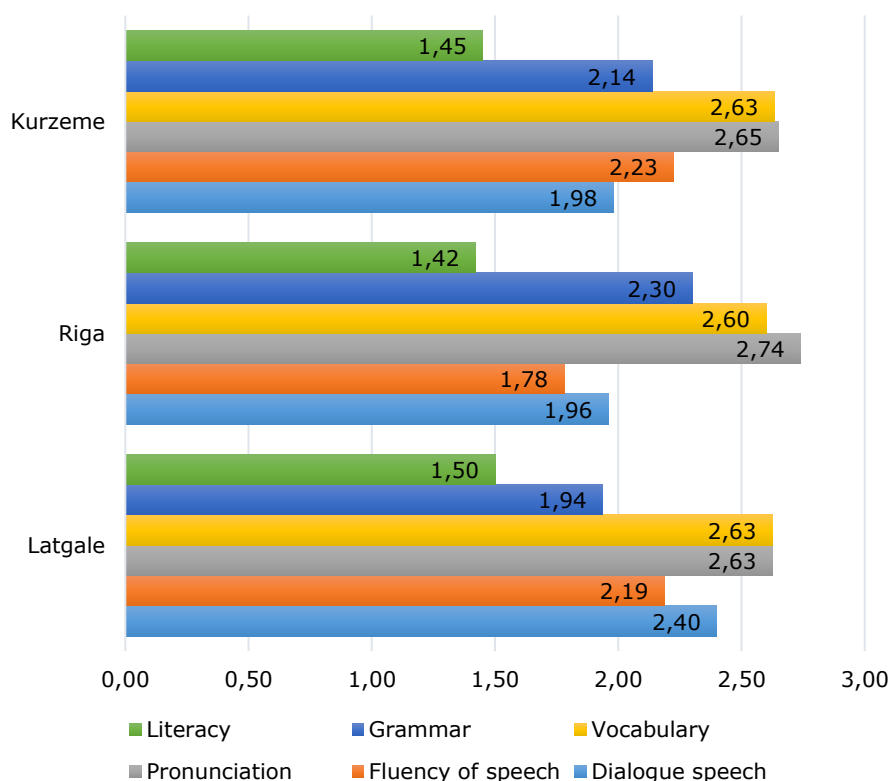
Vocabulary acquisition was the next highest result, but this assessment score already significantly differed depending on the pre-school group the child was attending. For children in Latvian language groups, the Latvian vocabulary was significantly richer (score 1.88–2.63), while for the minority children who attended groups with a dominant Russian language on a daily basis the Latvian vocabulary was very poor (score 0.87–1.28) and only covered a few of the most commonly used words in everyday life; more often they were nouns usually in the nominative (see also Gentner, 1982; Caselli, Bates, Casadio et al., 1995; Rūķe-Draviņa, 2017 [1977], Markus, 2018).

Regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers came into force in 2019; it means that in 2020, when we made the last entries, the new requirements for the provision of bilingual education and communication in minority pre-school

groups and in the first grades of schools had been in force for a year. However, during the study in Kurzeme and Riga in 2020 we concluded that not all minority children had sufficiently learnt Latvian, therefore some minority children, who had attended groups with a dominant Russian language, were advised to continue their education for another year; they were going to start school later. The results of the Latvian language analysis obtained in 2020 generally confirmed the previous trend - the Latvian language skills of minority children who do not attend groups with Latvian language on a daily basis, are much worse (see Figure 6) compared to the Latvian language skills of other children (see Figures 4, 5).

**Figure 4**

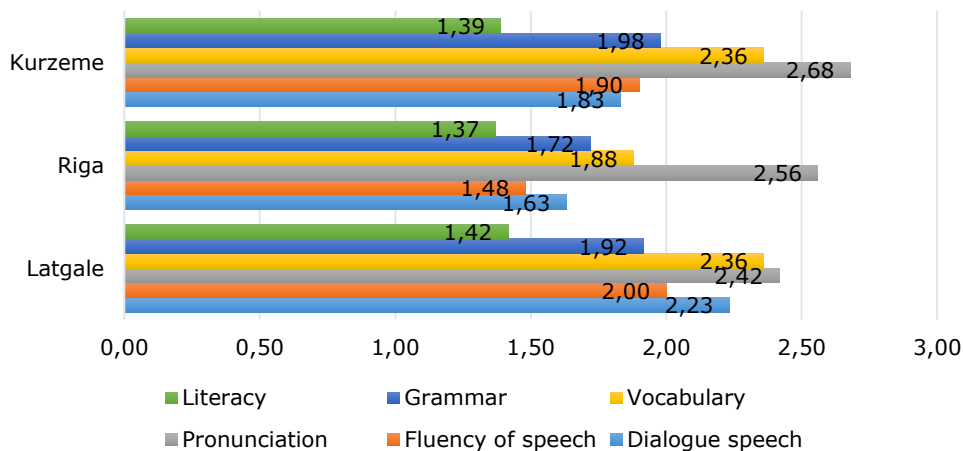
*Comparison of average Latvian language proficiency results for children with Latvian as their mother tongue in 2020*



Note. The score from 0–3.

**Figure 5**

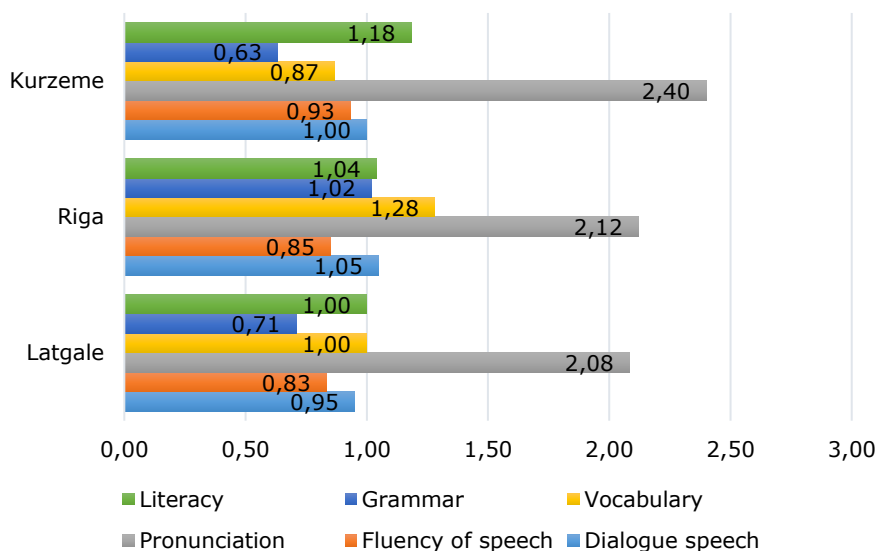
*Comparison of average Latvian language proficiency results of minority children in Latvian language groups in 2020*



*Note.* The score from 0–3.

**Figure 6**

*Comparison of average Latvian language proficiency results of minority children in Russian language groups in 2020*



*Note.* The score from 0–3.

After the reduction of the first pandemic prohibitions in June 2020, children's speech recordings and their analyses were also continued in Latgale, where there is a stronger use of sub-dialects. However, in the tests of Latgale children, only 3 girls could speak the Latgalian sub-dialects of the High Latvian dialect. Two of them did not pronounce the consonants *ķ* and *ģ* softly enough – [kj] and [gj]. In general, their dialect differed from the literary language.

Also in Latgale, differences in Latvian language acquisition can be observed depending on whether minority children attend a pre-school education group with the Latvian language, or with a dominant Russian language on a daily basis (see Figures 5 and 6). Even if the average pronunciation results are the best, in groups with the Latvian language on a daily basis (score 2.42–2.63) and in groups with Russian on a daily basis, they are lower in Latgale as a whole (score 2.08).

The results of the Latvian language analysis obtained in 2020 still show the previous trend – the Latvian language skills of minority children who did not attend groups with the Latvian language on a daily basis fared much worse (see Figure 6) compared to the Latvian language skills of other children (see Figures 4 and 5). A similar fact, also found in 2020, that the children of national minorities who visited groups with a dominant Russian language on a daily basis tried to switch to Russian shows that in general the practice of using the Latvian language in their daily lives is insufficient, as noted by the authors of the previous research (Markus, 2018; Stangaine, 2016; Tomme-Jukēvica, 2018).

### **Legislative Theory vs. Practice in 2019–2020**

Part III, Article 9 to Annex 2, entitled “Model Minority Pre-school Education Programme” to the already mentioned Cabinet Regulation No. 716 of November 21, 2018, states:

During the entire stage of pre-school education the acquisition of the Latvian language shall be promoted in an integrated study process through a bilingual approach which is implemented in cooperation among teachers, specialists, and other employees of an educational institution according to

the development of a child, and the Latvian language shall also be used in daily communication. The Latvian language shall be the main means of communication in the play session for children from the age of five years, except for purposefully organised activities for the acquisition of a minority language and ethnic culture. (Cabinet of Ministers Regulation of 2018 No. 716, Annex 2, III, 9).

In reality, minority children who attend Russian-language groups in pre-school education on a daily basis have incomplete knowledge of Latvian vocabulary and grammar, and tend not to use it or make mistakes, which prevents children from speaking fluently, engaging in dialogue and thus demonstrating Latvian language skills. Regular switching of codes from the mother tongue to Latvian for minority children who attend groups with Russian on a daily basis creates difficulties in engaging in dialogue expressing needs. It is well known that language acquisition is stimulated by internal and external factors (Chondrogianni & Marinis, 2011; French, G., 2013; Pearson, Fernandez, Lewedeg & Oller, 1997; Vermeer, 2001; Whitehead, 2009), but practical language application also facilitates language acquisition and improves communicative competence (Dukes & Smith, 2007; Garrett – Rucks & Osborn, 2016; Hymes, 1971; Johnson, 2003; Tomasello, 2000, 2003). During the research, in conversations with the parents of these children, we ascertained that the communication in families takes place in Russian, and in these groups of minority children in pre-school education institutions, the Russian language dominates both in communication with children and their parents. The linguistic environment of these children does not promote the learning of the Latvian language. Both the understanding of the Latvian language and the ability to speak are insufficient, therefore children do not fully answer questions about what they have seen and heard, do not ask for information, do not express their needs, do not engage in conversation on everyday topics, and those related to the learning process, cannot read short words commonly used in everyday situations and in the learning process. As a result, some families admitted that their children would have to repeat a year, while others promised to fund a private teacher to help them in their 1<sup>st</sup> grade studies.

Aware of the need for minority children to know the state language in Latvia, the research team presented the first results to the Ministry of

Education and Science of Latvia and will continue this research to help children to acquire language. Still the tasks of the Latvian language as a second language specified in the legislation are not performed with the required proficiency in the groups of minority children with the Russian language on a daily basis. A new study in Latvia that tests the Latvian language acquisition of minority pre-school children using an image-based test provides convincing indicators of the quality of Latvian language acquisition. The research team will also study the preparedness of pre-school teachers to work in minority children groups not only in the Russian language but also in Latvian.

Axelsson (2011) has described Sweden's considerable experience in dealing with a seemingly reversal situation, where very little had been done in the mother tongue of immigrant children in educational process in pre-school and the children's parents were dissatisfied. It was concluded that during the one-year research, the children's mother tongue was used or there was a conversation about it in only thirteen cases. As a result, although children under the age of five acquired a Swedish language proficiency and demonstrated a good ability to read and write in Swedish, they were unable to achieve a similar proficiency in their mother tongue (Akselone, 2011, p. 126). Complex work was done to improve language learning, for example, the bilingual competence of teachers was investigated, groups were set up of teachers with children's mother tongue for meals and outdoor activities, multilingual pre-school institutions bought children's books in different languages, and audio recordings of stories were carried out for children to listen independently (Akselone, 2011, p. 130).

From the Swedish experience, we can learn a complex approach to improve language learning, although in Latvian kindergartens the experience has been relatively different so far. Children of minority parents living and working in Latvia mostly attended minority children's groups with a dominant Russian language daily. Those children had already become proficient in Russian well by the age of 5 or 6, while children of immigrants, and refugees who were learning Russian were rare in our institutions. Since the beginning of Russia's warfare in Ukraine in 2022, more and more Ukrainian refugees have chosen Latvia as their home, and their children will attend Latvian pre-school institutions. This situation imposes new duties and responsibilities for

researchers, educators, and education policy makers, considering that most Ukrainian refugees are not native Russian speakers.

## **Conclusions**

1. Latvian as the only state language is a major symbol of the state along with the national anthem, flag, and coat of arms. The independence of the state and the status of Latvian as the only state language are closely interacting; however, the interaction does not guarantee a complete protection and usage of the state language in all its functions including education. Education is a special sociolinguistic field where processes of languages interacting with each other and multilingualism take place on a regular basis.

2. The analysis of language recordings shows that regardless of the nationality the Latvian language skills of those children who attended pre-school education groups with class activities conducted in Latvian on a daily basis are good and meet the standards set by the Cabinet of Ministers Regulation in order to successfully continue studies in the 1<sup>st</sup> grade.

3. The Latvian language skills of minority children who attend pre-school education groups with a dominant Russian language on a daily basis are still insufficient and do not comply with the requirements set in Cabinet Regulation No. 716 of 2018 that the children should be prepared to start school with Latvian as the learning language or bilingually. This conclusion does not depend on the region in which the children live. These children are Russian monolinguals and this does not facilitate their communication outside the family and community.

4. Pre-school minority children who attend groups with a dominant Russian language on a daily basis have limited vocabulary, underdeveloped dialogue, impaired speech, which is intensified by very minimal grammar knowledge, and also the children's literacy does not meet national requirements.

5. The results of the research clearly show that pre-school age minority children are able to imitate another language well because in all the studied regions the Latvian language pronunciation indicators are the best

for the minority children. Insufficient knowledge of the Latvian language, in general, can be explained by the insufficient use of Latvian in everyday life.

6. In order for minority children of pre-school age to successfully learn Latvian in accordance with the legislation, it is not enough to have only a few Latvian language lessons a week, but it is necessary to create a real bilingual language usage environment that may include communication, games, visual aids, etc. in daily pre-school education groups.

7. The results and recommendations have been presented to the specialists responsible for pre-school education in the Ministry of Education and Science.

### References

- Akselone, M. (2011). Daudzvalodu pirmsskolas Zviedrijā: ko patiesībā vēlas vecāki [Multilingual pre - schools in Sweden: what parents really wish]. In Ozolante M. (Ed.), *Jaunais un aktuālais bilingvālajā izglītībā Latvijā un pasaulē. Rakstu krājums* [The new and the topical in bilingual education in Latvia and in the world. Collection of articles] (pp. 124–130). Jelgava, LVA.
- Anspoka, Z. (2019). *Ieskats latviešu valodas kā dzimtās valodas mācību grāmatu izstrādes vēsturē* [An insight into the history of development of Latvian language textbooks]. [http://bilingvals.lv/uplods\\_docs/Zenta\\_Ans\\_poka\\_zin\\_raksts\\_1303883724.pdf](http://bilingvals.lv/uplods_docs/Zenta_Ans_poka_zin_raksts_1303883724.pdf)
- Asher, J., & Garcia, R. (1969). The optimal age to learn a foreign language. *Modern Language Journal*, 53, 334–341.
- Bérešová, J. (2019). Supporting objectivity in testing speaking skills. *Educational Alternatives. Journal of International Scientific Publications*, 17, 8–15. [www.scientific-publications.net](http://www.scientific-publications.net)
- Blinkena, A. (2000). Kā latviešu valoda aizsargāta [How the Latvian language is protected]. (Lauku Avīze, 2000, 8. janv., Nr. 3, 12. lpp.). In A. Blinkena (2017), *Caur vārdu birzi. Darbu izlase II* [Through the word grove. Selected works II ] (pp. 55–59), Rīga.
- Chondrogianni, V., & Marinis, Th. (2011). Differential effects of internal and



- external factors on the development of vocabulary, tense morphology and morpho-syntax in successive bilingual children. *Linguistic Approaches to Bilingualism*, 1, 318–345.
- Druviete, I. (2018). Valoda kā valsts identitāte: trīsdesmit gadi kopš valsts valodas statusa atjaunošanas latviešu valodai [Language as a state identity: Thirty years since the restoration of the status of the state language to the Latvian language]. In I. Druviete (Ed.), *Nacionālās identitātes sociolingvistiskie aspekti. Rakstu krājums* [Sociolinguistic aspects of the national identity. Collection of articles] (pp. 45–62). Latviešu valodas institūts.
- Dukes, C., & Smith, M. (2007). *Developing Pre-school Communication and Language*. SAGE Publications.
- French, G. (2013). *Early Speech and Language Matters: Enriching the Communication Environment and Language Development in Early Childhood* (1<sup>st</sup> ed.). Barnardo's.
- Gentner, D. (1982). Why nouns are learned before verbs: Linguistic relativity versus natural partitioning. *Language development, Vol. 2: Language, thought, and culture* (pp. 301–334). Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Garret-Rucks, P., & Osborn, T. A. (2016). *Intercultural Competence in Instructed Language Learning: Bridging Theory and Practice*. Information Age Publishing, INC.
- Grozījumi Vispārējās izglītības likumā 14.05.2020 [Amendments to the General Education Law 14.05.2020] <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/314994-grozijumi-visparejas-izglitibas-likuma>
- Hoff, E. (2005). *Language development*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Thomson Wadsworth.
- Johnson, M. (2003). *A Philosophy of Second Language Acquisition*. Yale University Press.
- Laizāne, I. (2019). *Latviešu valoda kā svešvaloda: lingvodidaktikas virziena attīstība Latvijā un ārpus tās* [Latvian language as a foreign language: the development of the linguodidactic direction in Latvia and abroad]. Doctoral thesis synopsis. Liepāja, Liepājas Universitāte.
- Latvijas Padomju Sociālistiskās Republikas 1989. gada 5. maija Valodu likums 1989 [Ministerial Law of the Soviet Socialist Republic of Latvia of 5<sup>th</sup> May 1989]. *Cīņa* [The Struggle], 106, 7 May 1989, 3.
-

- <https://www.barikadopedija.lv/raksti/536917>
- Likums par valsts valodu [The State Language Law]. *Valdības Vēstnesis* [Government Journal], Nr. 7, 1935. g. 9. janvāris. <http://valoda.ailab.lv/latval/vidusskolai/VALODA/v9-4.htm>
- Markus, D. (2018). *Prognozējamā neprognozējamība. Bērnu valoda Latvijā* [Predictable unpredictability. Child Language in Latvia]. Rīga, Zinātne.
- Markus, D., & Zirina, T. (2019). Assessment tools of Latvian language acquisition: problems and application versions, *INTED 2019 Proceedings. 13<sup>th</sup> International Technology, Education and Development Conference, Valencia, Spain. March 11–13*, 3242–3247.
- Munoz, C. (2014). Contrasting effects of starting age and input on the oral performance of foreign language learners. *Applied Linguistics*, 35, 463–482.
- Noteikumi par valsts valodu [State language rules] (18.02.1932). *Lik. Kr.* [Body of Laws] 1932, 54.
- Noteikumi par valsts pirmsskolas izglītības vadlīnijām un pirmsskolas izglītības programmu paraugiem* [Regulations Regarding the State Guidelines for Pre-school Education and the Model Pre-school Education Programmes].(2018). <https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/303371>
- Oficiālās statistikas portāls [Official Statistics Portal] (2021, November 1). <https://stat.gov.lv/lv/statistikas-temas/iedzivotaji/iedzivotaju-skaitis/tabulas/irs010-iedzivotaju-skaitis-gada-sakuma-ta?themeCode=IR>
- Oller, K., Pearson, B., & A. Cobo-Lewis (2007). Profile effects in early bilingual language and literacy. *Applied Psycholinguistics*, 28, 191–230.
- Par Latvijas PSR Valodu likuma grozījumiem un papildinājumiem [On amendments and additions to the Latvian PSR Language Law]. *Latvijas Republikas Augstākās Padomes un Valdības Ziņotājs* [Rapporteur of the Supreme Council of the Republic of Latvia and the Government], 15/16, 16 April 1992.; *Diena* [The Day], 67, 10 April 1992). <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/65484>
- Pearson, B., Fernandez, S., Lewedeg, V., & Oller, D. K. (1997). The relation of input factors to lexical learning by bilingual infants. *Applied Psycholinguistics*, 18(1), 41–58.

- Rūķe-Draviņa, V. (2017) [1954]. Bilingvisma problēmas. In I. Jansone (Ed.), *Darbu izlase* (pp. 202–210). LU Latviešu valodas institūts.
- Rūķe-Draviņa, V. (2017) [1977]. The development of Color and Numeral systems in young children. *International Journal of Psycholinguistics*, 4(2), 61–72. In I. Jansone (Ed.), *Velta Rūķe – Draviņa. Darbu izlase* [Velta Rūķe – Draviņa. Selected works] (pp.78–89). LU Latviešu valodas institūts.
- Stangaine, I. (2016). Pirmsskolas vecuma bērnu valodas apguves nozīme komunikācijā. *Bērnu valoda Latvijā 21. gadsimtā, II* (pp. 175–197). RaKa.
- Tomasello, M. (2000). Do young children have adult syntactic competence? *Cognition*, 74, 209–390.
- Tomasello, M. (2003). *Constructing a language: A usage-based theory of language acquisition*. Harvard University Press.
- Tomme-Jukēvica, I. (2018). *Bilingvālo rusofono pirmsskolas vecuma bērnu latviešu runas specifika* [Doctoral disertation, Ventspils Augstskola].
- Vermeer, A. (2001). Breadth and depth of vocabulary in relation to L1/L2 acquisition and frequency of input. *Applied Psycholinguistics*, 22, 217–234.
- Whitehead, M. (2009). *Supporting Language and Literacy Development in the Early Years* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). McGraw-Hill Education.

**Dace Markus**

Liepojas universitetas, Latvija  
markus@latnet.lv

**Tija Zīriņa**

Liepojas universitetas, Latvija  
zirina.tija@gmail.com

**Kārlis Markus**

Latvijas gyvības mokslu ir tehnoloģiju universitetas, Latvija  
karlis@jic.lv

**KALBOS POLITIKOS ĪGYVENDINIMAS LATVIŲ IKIMOKYKLINIO  
UGDYMO ĪSTAIGOJE: TAUTINIŲ MAŽUMŲ VAIKŲ LATVIŲ  
KALBOS ĪGŪDŽIAI**

**Santrauka.** Latvių kalba – vienintelė valstybinė kalba Latvijoje ir vienas iš nepriklausomos valstybės simbolių. Straipsnyje trumpai apžvelgiama nelengva latvių kalbos įsitvirtinimo istorija. Švietimas – viena sričių, kurioje labai svarbų plėtoti daugiakalbystę, nepamirštant stiprinti valstybinės kalbos įgūdžių ir jų taikymo. Švietimo sistemoje ir toliau išryškėja latvių kalbos įsisavinimo trūkumų, tad 2018 m. priimtuose Ministrų kabineto nuostatuose „Nuostatai dėl valstybinių ikimokyklinio ugdymo gairių ir pavyzdinių ikimokyklinio ugdymo programų“ aktualizuojamas poreikis sėkmingai pereiti nuo ikimokyklinio ugdymo prie pradinio ugdymo mokykloje, nuo ikimokyklinio ugdymo prie dvikalbio pradinio ugdymo arba ugdymo latvių kalba. Mažumų šeimose, kuriose vyrauja rusų kalba, vaikai rusų kalbą išmoksta gerokai anksčiau nei sulaukia ikimokyklinio amžiaus, todėl turi pradėti mokytis valstybinės kalbos dar priešmokykliniame amžiuje, jei to nebuvo padaryta. Atsižvelgiant į šiuos reikalavimus, straipsnyje analizuojami ikimokyklinio amžiaus vaikų latvių kalbos įgūdžiai, remiantis 375 vaikų kalbos įrašais, kuriuos tyrėjai padarė 2019 m. ir 2020 m. atlikę tyrimus trijuose regionuose – Kuržemėje (Vakarų Latvija), Latgaloje (Rytų Latvija) ir Rygoje (sostinė). Kiekvienoje teritorijoje surinkta medžiaga suskirstyta į tris grupes: latvių vaikų įrašai, tautinių mažumų vaikų įrašai grupėse, kurios vartoja latvių kalbą kasdien, ir tautinių mažumų vaikų įrašai grupėse, kurios vartoja rusų kalbą kasdien. Pagrindinė problema yra ta, kad, nepriklausomai nuo regiono, tautinių mažumų vaikų, kasdien lankančių ikimokyklinio ugdymo grupes su vyraujančia rusų kalba, latvių kalbos įgūdžiai vis dar yra per menki ir neatitinka 2018 m. Vyriausybės nutarimu Nr. 716 nustatytų reikalavimų, apibrėžiančių, kad vaikai turi būti pasirengę mokymuisi mokykloje, kurioje mokymas vyksta latvių kalba arba dviem kalbomis (latvių ir rusų). Tai rodo, kad teisės aktų nuostatos nėra tinkamai įgyvendinamos ir būtina tobulinti tautinių mažumų vaikų latvių kalbos mokymo sistemą.

**Pagrindinės sąvokos:** kalbos politika; tautinių mažumų vaikai; kalbos mokymasis; ikimokyklinis amžius.